WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A laser apparatus, comprising:

an elongate laser chamber;

an electrode structure disposed within the chamber, the electrode structure comprising an anode spaced apart from a cathode; and

an elongate baffle disposed in the laser chamber, the baffle adapted to arrest a plurality of particles generated within the chamber.

2. The laser apparatus as in claim 1, wherein the baffle comprises an open-celled foam.

3. The laser apparatus as in claim 2 wherein the open-celled foam comprises an open-celled metal foam.

4. The laser apparatus as in claim 3 wherein the open-celled metal foam is selected from a group of metal foams consisting essentially of nickel, aluminum, brass, steel, and copper.

5. The laser apparatus as in claim 1 wherein the baffle comprises an open-celled ceramic.

6. The laser apparatus as in claim 1 wherein the elongate baffle is adapted to at least partially fill the laser chamber.

7. The laser apparatus as in claim 1 wherein the electrode structure further comprises a plurality of pre-ionization pins, and wherein at least some of the plurality of particles are generated by the pre-ionization pins.

8. The laser apparatus as in claim 1 wherein at least some of the plurality of particles comprise a metal.

9. The laser apparatus as in claim 1 wherein the laser chamber comprises an excimer laser.

10. The laser apparatus as in claim 1 wherein the laser chamber is devoid of an active filtration system.

11. The laser apparatus as in claim 1 wherein the elongate baffle is generally parallel to the electrode structure.

12. The laser apparatus as in claim 1 further comprising a first end baffle positioned adjacent a first end of the electrode structure and a second end baffle positioned adjacent a second end of the electrode structure.

13. The laser apparatus as in claim 12 wherein the first and second end baffles comprise an open-celled foam.

14. The laser apparatus as in claim 12 wherein the first and second end baffles are adapted to control a gaseous flow pattern adjacent the first and second electrode structure ends.

15. The laser apparatus as in claim 14 further comprising an optics package disposed at an end of the laser chamber, and wherein the first end baffle is adapted to prevent the gaseous flow pattern from washing over the optics package.

16. The laser apparatus as in claim 1 wherein the elongate baffle is further adapted for attenuating acoustic waves.

17. A laser apparatus, comprising:

a casing defining a laser chamber cavity;

an electrode structure disposed within the laser chamber cavity, the electrode structure having first and second ends disposed adjacent corresponding first and second laser chamber ends;

a gas circulation mechanism for circulating a gas within the laser chamber cavity; and

a baffle system disposed in the laser chamber cavity, the baffle system adapted for directing the gas towards the electrode structure and for providing a non-turbulent gas flow around the electrode structure first and second ends.

18. The laser apparatus as in claim 17 wherein the baffle system comprises an elongate primary baffle positioned generally parallel to the electrode structure.

19. The laser apparatus as in claim 17 wherein the baffle system comprises a first end baffle positioned adjacent the first electrode structure end and a second end baffle positioned adjacent the second electrode structure end.

20. The laser apparatus as in claim 17 wherein the baffle system is further adapted to arrest a plurality of particles generated within the laser chamber cavity.

21. The laser apparatus as in claim 17 further comprising an optics package disposed at the first laser chamber end, and wherein the baffle system is adapted to prevent the circulating gas from washing over the optics package.

22. The laser apparatus as in claim 17 wherein the baffle system comprises an open-celled foam.

23. The laser apparatus as in claim 22 wherein the open-celled foam comprises an open-celled metal foam.

24. The laser apparatus as in claim 17 wherein the baffle system fills greater than about one percent (1%) of the laser chamber cavity.

25. The laser apparatus as in claim 17 wherein the baffle system is adapted to attenuate at least a portion of the acoustic energy within the laser chamber cavity during operation of the laser apparatus.

26. A method of filtering particulates from a gas in a laser apparatus, the method comprising:

providing a laser apparatus comprising a chamber, an electrode structure disposed in the chamber, and a gas circulation system;

inserting a baffle system into the laser chamber, the baffle system comprising an open-celled foam; and

engaging the gas circulation system to circulate the gas within the laser chamber, the gas having a plurality of particles disposed therein;

wherein at least some of the particles are arrested by the baffle system.

27. The method as in claim 26 wherein the baffle system comprises an open-celled metal foam.

28. The method as in claim 26 wherein the laser apparatus further comprises an optics package, and the baffle system is further adapted and positioned to prevent the circulating gas from washing over the optics package.

29. The method as in claim 26 wherein the baffle system comprises first and second end baffles disposed adjacent first and second ends of the electrode structure, respectively, and wherein the first and second end baffles operate to smooth a gas flow pattern at the first and second electrode structure ends.

30. An excimer laser comprising:

a laser chamber;

a lasing gas disposed within the chamber;

a pair of lasing electrodes within the chamber; and

an open celled metallic foam disposed in the laser chamber so as to collect particles generated in the chamber during firing of the laser.

31. The excimer laser as in claim 30 wherein lasing of the gas between the electrodes during firing of the laser generates a photoablative laser beam suitable for removal of corneal tissue so as to correct refraction.

32. The excimer laser as in claim 30 wherein lasing of the gas between the electrodes during firing of the laser generates a pulsed laser having a wavelength of about 193 nm.